

To the North Dakota State Legislature:

This is written testimony in opposition to H.B. 1522. We urge you to give this bill a DO NOT PASS. The following represents our own views and not necessarily those of the institution that employs us.

H.B. 1522 is needlessly cruel to a vulnerable group of young people who are at high risk of suicide. If passed, it is likely to cause our state public embarrassment, as the provision against students who identify as “any animal species other than human” is clearly a credulous response to a hoax that circulated on TikTok. (The hoax alleged that schools were providing litterboxes to students who identified as cats; news outlets including Reuters and Politifact have disproved it.)

Finally, as historians, we dispute this bill’s claim to be an emergency measure, which implies a new and urgent issue. The history of individuals in this region whose gender is “inconsistent with [their] sex,” as H.R. 1522 defines it, predates the existence of North Dakota as a state. Ojibwe warrior and diplomat Ozaawindib, who lived in the Red River area in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was assigned male at birth but lived as a woman. Her community accepted her and others like her. It would be arrogant of us to deny this historical precedent in the name of “emergency.” Again, we urge you to give this ill-conceived bill, H.B. 1522, a DO NOT PASS.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laurel Sanders
Assistant Professor, UND

Dr. Jeremy Kingsbury
Assistant Teaching Professor, UND